

Coon Rapids
Herald
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FRONT PAGE

House bonding bill has nothing for Northstar

by T.W. Budig
ECM capitol reporter

The Minnesota House March 18 passed an \$839 million bonding bill, but it was shorn of Northstar Corridor commuter rail line funding before leaving the House floor.

An amendment offered by Rep. William Kuisle, R-Rochester, stripped all commuter rail funding — including some \$9 million slated for Northstar — from the bonding bill.

The amendment was adopted on a 76-57 vote.



Tingelstad

Some 11 Republican caucus members voted March 14 for an amendment authored by Rep. Kathy Tingelstad, R-Andover, that funded Northstar and other transit projects.

While the amendment was successful, it splintered the Republican caucus and the bonding bill failed.

But support crumbled among the 11 Republican lawmakers March 18, only four of the 11 voting against the Kuisle amendment.

See Bill: Page 10

Bill: What will the governor do?

Continued from Page 1

The House bonding bill now again contains nothing for Northstar. The Senate bonding bill has an \$8 million "placer" amount for the commuter rail project.

The Ventura administration is seeking \$120 million in bonding for Northstar.

Tingelstad said she will continue to seek funding for Northstar. One possible avenue is the House transportation package, she said.

She wasn't surprised by Monday's reversal, said Tingelstad.

"Today I figured it (Northstar funding) was going to go," she said. "They (leadership) had three days to work on people."

House Majority Leader Tim Pawlenty, R-Eagan, said the House leadership realized that Northstar wasn't that big of an issue after discovering not all of the Republican supporters felt really strongly about it.

"There was an appeal to teamwork (within the caucus)," said Pawlenty.

Rep. Jim Knoblach, R-St. Cloud, one

of the 11 who originally voted for Northstar, voted for the Kuisle amendment. The bonding bill contained too many good things for St. Cloud to let the bill fail, Knoblach said.

Besides Knoblach, six other Republican lawmakers changed their positions from March 14, including Rep. Andy Westerberg, R-Blaine.

Reps. Jim Abeler, R-Anoka; Tom Hackbarth, R-Cedar; and Tingelstad voted against the Kuisle amendment.

For Northstar to get funding in the bonding bill will take a concerted effort from Gov. Jesse Ventura, according to Tingelstad.

"Obviously the governor is really going to have to come to the table and push it in conference committee to have it come through," said Tingelstad.

"I'll keep fighting until we go 'sine die.'"

Besides Abeler, Hackbarth, and Tingelstad, Reps. Connie Bernardy, DFL-Fridley; Barb Goodwin, DFL-Columbia Heights; and Luanne Koskinen, DFL-Coon Rapids, voted to keep commuter rail funding in the bonding bill.

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IN THEIR WORDS IN THEIR WORDS

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What complicates the picture is
that there'll be two bonding bills in
the House.
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Rep. Kathy
Tingelstad

COMMUTER TRANSIT Amendments expected

Tingelstad, Westerberg applying pressure on behalf of Northstar

by T.W. Budig
Capitol reporter

Rep. Kathy Tingelstad, R-Andover, expects to see amendments being offered in committee on behalf of the Northstar Corridor commuter rail line.

House Transportation Finance Committee Chairwoman Rep. Carol Molnau, R-Chaska, has said her committee is recommending to the House Capital Investment

Committee that no funding be earmarked for Northstar in the bonding bill.

But, Tingelstad said Rep. Andy Westerberg, R-Blaine, intends to offer an amendment in the transportation finance committee to include funding for Northstar.

Tingelstad, who serves on the House Capital Investment Committee, said she intends to offer an amendment in that

committee to include bonding for Northstar.

“What complicates the picture is that there'll be two bonding bills in the House,” one dedicated to transportation, she said.

Eventually, the Northstar debate could wind up on the House floor, Tingelstad said.

Northstar supporters are counting on Gov. Jesse Ventura's support for the project, she said.

Tingelstad said one benefit to funding Northstar is the additional federal dollars that could be brought in.

If nothing happens this year in the Legislature, federal authorities might push the project back on their funding list, she said.

Tingelstad is the chief author of the Northstar Corridor commuter rail bonding bill in the House.

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COMMUTER RAIL *Greasing the skids?*

Tingelstad says she's committed to Northstar and so is the leadership

by T.W. Budig
Capitol reporter

Rep. Kathy Tingelstad, R-Andover, plans to stick to her Northstar Corridor commuter rail line amendment when the House takes the floor again to consider the bonding bill.

"I'm very committed," said Tingelstad March 15.

Tingelstad, backed by 71 votes including those of 10 fellow Republicans, successfully amended the House's \$741 million bonding bill March 14 to include \$9 million in funding for Northstar.

Several other transit programs received lesser funding.

The amendment splintered the Republican caucus, prompting a flurry of amendments, and ultimately greased the skids for the bonding bill to crash.

How things unfold on with Northstar depends in part on how many Republican supporters peel off, according to Tingelstad.

Tingelstad wants to see the House pass a bonding

bill, she said.

She credits House Speaker Steve Sviggum, R-Kenyon, and House Majority Leader Tim Pawlenty, R-Eagan, for letting the process play out on Northstar.

There's been no backroom talks with her to try to entice her to change her mind on commuter rail, she said.

"They've been very upfront on this. They've allowed the process to occur," said Tingelstad.

Clearly upset March 14 on the House floor with the aggressiveness of Northstar opponents — the majority of her caucus — Tingelstad said the opponents had every right to pursue their objective.

It's gamesmanship.

But the votes the Republican opponents were trying to force — votes for affordable housing or Northstar — were "bad votes" being forced on fellow Republicans, said Tingelstad.

Support for the amendment among north metro

Republicans was mixed.

While Tingelstad and Reps. Jim Abeler, R-Anoka, Andy Westerberg, R-Blaine, and Tom Hackbarth R-Cedar, supported the amendment, two Republican lawmakers to the west, Reps. Bruce Anderson and Mark Olson, did not.

Rep. Jim Knoblach, R-St. Cloud, also supported the amendment.

Northstar is proposed to run from Minneapolis to St. Cloud through Anoka County on existing Burlington-Northern Santa Fe Railroad tracks.

Though the \$9 million Tingelstad seeks is far below the \$120 million Gov. Jesse Ventura wants, it would provide some funding for it going into conference committee.

The Northstar project is proposed on existing Burlington-Northern Santa Fe Railroad tracks in an 82-mile corridor from Minneapolis to Rice, west of St. Cloud, through Anoka County.

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**Rep. Westerberg doing
good work at Capitol**

To the editor:

As a legislator from the north metro area, District 51A state Rep. Andy Westerberg (R-Blaine) has done an excellent job of promoting and pursuing funding for transportation projects in the Blaine area. He has worked hard to bring the concerns of Blaine area residents to the forefront of the transportation debate.

Most notably, Rep. Westerberg has fought for funding to make the intersection of highways 65 and 242 safer. State Farm recently ranked the intersection as one of the most dangerous in the metropolitan area, and Westerberg is truly concerned about preventing future accidents, injuries and tragedies.

You can be proud of the work Rep. Westerberg has done for you at the Capitol on not only transportation, but all of the other issues the Legislature deals with on a daily basis. He is a true representative of the people of your area and is to be commended for his service to your community.

Steve Sviggum
Speaker of the House

Westerberg faces Hobot challenge

■ House District 51A contestants

1. What qualities would make you an effective legislator?

Hobot: I love working with people, which is critical to develop consensus within the diversity of the House of Representatives.

I'm not shy of hard work and I stand up for my beliefs.

Westerberg: My past accomplishments and the relationships I have developed by being able to work with people from all walks of life.

I have held many positions requiring high ethical standards and a kind heart towards people in need.

I am a good listener and I have the ability to find solutions to problems.

2. Funding of K-12 education represents about 40 percent of the state's general fund, yet local school districts continue to see the need to seek excess levy referendums. Is the present funding adequate? Be specific.

Hobot: K-12 funding is not adequate in Blaine.

Two years ago, the Legislature voted and promised to assume 100 percent of K-12 funding.

In absence of following through on that promise, we have levies in District 11, 12 and 16.

Compounding our funding problems, especially in District 16, the new construction property tax base has not matured, yet our new residents are enrolling children in our schools.

We have a gap in our funding and I believe the state education dollars should follow growth.

Westerberg: No. I continue to work for adequate funding for our schools in my legislative district.

The big keys to success are: equity for our school district and getting the federal government to fulfill its promise to pay up to 40 percent of the cost for special ed.

3. How would you solve the state's budget deficit in the next biennium: tax increases, program cuts or both? Be specific about which taxes you would increase and/or which programs you would cut or eliminate.

Hobot: I think it is irresponsible for any candidate to say we can balance the budget without raising some taxes.

At the same time, where we can optimize the most efficient use of tax dollars, cut our redundancies we need to do so.

I support the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce's recommendation to raise the gas tax.

I believe we need to protect funding for areas, including education, the DNR and health care.

Westerberg: First, it remains to be seen exactly how big the deficit will be.

From here, I will call for further review of government methods of operating in hopes of finding new ways to do more with less.

I believe government should operate the same way families must, if we do not have enough money coming in - then we must adjust the amounts being spent.

Taxes to balance the budget would be a last resort option.

4. How would you address the transportation needs of the state, especially the metro area? Do you support a gas tax increase? If not, what other sources of transportation funding would you propose? What is your position on state funding for the Northstar Corridor commuter rail system?

Hobot: We need to widen Highway 65 to three lanes and have an overpass at Highway 65 and 242.

I support a gas tax increase upon completion of these improvements.

However, roads are not the only response we have to our unacceptable commute times.

I support the Northstar

ANOKA COUNTY UNION

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CANDIDATES

State Rep. Andy Westerberg, Republican, is challenged by Chad Hobot, DFL, in House District 51A, which includes most of the city of Blaine, except for the southwestern and southeastern corners.



Chad Hobot

Corridor commuter rail.

I support state funding for this but only in conjunction with federal and local support from the counties that the line would travel through.

Westerberg: Transportation is in desperate need of help.

I have worked hard at finding a solution to the safety issues concerning Highway 65.

I am confident that the proposal for three lanes in each direction will be back on the table soon.

Incredible growth in our area, both business and residential, require road development.

For every 100 people it is estimated there are 95 cars and trucks looking for roads to travel.

I will support a user fee (gas tax increase) to help meet the demands before us.

I also want to dedicate the vehicle sales taxes to our transportation system.

I believe we should encourage other modes of transportation including buses and the Northstar commuter rail.

Both of these options provide many advantages to our citizens and increase our standard of living.

5. Biography.

Hobot: BA, University of St. Thomas. Teacher in a Japanese High School - 1996-1998. Realtor, 1999-present. Member, Attorney General's Working Group on Health Care. Member, Attorney General's Working Group on Privacy. Member, Blaine Jaycees. Member, Blaine Blazin' Fourth of July Planning Committee. Members, Pheasants Forever. Avid hunter and fisherman.



Rep. Andy Westerberg

Westerberg: I have lived in Blaine for over 20 years after graduating from Coon Rapids High.

I also graduated from Anoka-Ramsey Community College and the American College with a CLU designation.

Insurance agent for the last 22 years and a registered rep helping people with financial solutions.

I am currently serving in my second term as the State Representative of District 51A.

I am a past president of the North Metro Association of Life Underwriters, and serve on the Government Affairs Committee for our local chamber of commerce.

Past chair, Fellowship of Christian Golfers; former volunteer firefighter; SLP/Blaine Lion; American Cancer Society, Red Cross, and Toys for Joy volunteer; married 26 years and have four children.

"K-12 funding is not adequate in Blaine. Two years ago, the Legislature voted and promised to assume 100 percent of K-12 funding. In absence of following through on that promise, we have levies in District 11, 12 and 16. Compounding our funding problems, especially in District 16, the new construction property tax base has not matured, yet our new residents are enrolling children in our schools. We have a gap in our funding and I believe the state education dollars should follow growth."

--Chad Hobot, DFL.

"I continue to work for adequate funding for our schools in my legislative district.

The big keys to success are: equity for our school district and getting the federal government to fulfill its promise to pay up to 40 percent of the cost for special ed."

--Rep. Andy Westerberg, Republican.

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Lawmakers look for ways out of \$2 billion hole

by Mark Nicklawske,
Stacy Jo Enge and Jake
Kapsner

Staff Writers

Calling for vigilance and faith in a post Sept. 11 world threatened by terrorism and massive budget deficits, Pastor Ken Harste of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Circle Pines led the state Senate in prayer to open the Minnesota legislative session Jan. 29 at the Capitol in St. Paul.

Harste's hope for sound governance in times of crisis may have resounded with area lawmakers who bowed their heads that noon.

Indeed, many people are praying for a quick solution to the state's projected budget deficits, including \$2 billion in the next 18 months.

But it will take much wrangling – and likely a lot of legislative time.

In fact, the projected deficit and a controversial state spending plan offered by Gov. Jesse Ventura could keep local legislators busy counting nickels and dimes well into spring.

After years of talking about rebates and tax cuts, lawmakers this year must look at new ways to balance a budget clobbered by the national economic downturn and a resulting revenue shortfall.

The 2002 legislative session, the second year of the biennium, was supposed to be a shorter session that dealt mainly with bonding issues. But now lawmakers must balance the budget, redraw district lines and tackle the endless baseball stadium issue as well. Things will likely go into extra innings, well beyond the scheduled end of



Krentz



Reiter



Krinkie



Westerberg

Lawmakers must balance the budget, redraw district lines and tackle the endless baseball stadium issue as well. Things will likely go into extra innings, well beyond the scheduled end of March closing date.

March closing date.

Republicans, Democrats and the "Jesse Party" can all blame the deficit.

"We've got some tough decisions ahead of us," said Sen. Jane Krentz (DFL-May Township). "We're going to have to work together to solve this problem. We've been fortunate in the past. We've fixed the roof, we've been investing in roads, infrastructure and building buildings. But now we have to maintain our support systems. The House and

Legislature/see page 11a

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Legislature

continued from page 1a

Senate are going to have to work together to keep those system in place."

Krentz said too much money was spent on rebates last session, causing the high deficit. She said the Legislature must fight the urge to cut important programs simply to balance the budget.

Ventura has already proposed cuts that would hurt social service programs like the Forest Lake Youth Service Bureau, she said. "We really have to be careful."

State Rep. **Andy Westerberg** (R-Blaine) said the budget shortfall has to be dealt with quickly, since, as he maintains, it is costing taxpayers \$3 million every week that nothing gets done.

"People will feel pain everywhere, since money has to be cut from everywhere," he said, adding that it means "giving up some of the wants" people have for a period of time.

Westerberg said he supports using money that has been saved, such as the \$230 million rainy day fund, the state's cash flow reserve of \$350 million, the remaining surplus of \$650 million, or the sales tax account of \$158 million.

The idea is one shared by other local Republicans, like Sen. Mady Reiter (R-Shoreview), who also advocates spending some of the state's tobacco settlement money.

"The problem with the deficit is that it's not a one-time deficit, but a structural deficit that we're having a problem with. That means future deficits if we don't take care of the problem," Westerberg said.

Both Westerberg and Krentz said the Legislature will discuss a new five cents a gallon gas tax proposed by Ventura. Westerberg said he would only support the tax if the money only goes to roads or transportation projects



Calling for vigilance and faith in a post Sept.-11 world threatened by terrorism and massive budget deficits, Pastor Ken Harste of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Circle Pines led the state Senate in prayer to open the Minnesota Legislative session Jan. 29 at the Capitol in St. Paul.

- Photo submitted

and not the general fund.

New stadium bills are also expected to hit the Capitol.

Westerberg said he wants to make sure professional sports teams stay in Minnesota, but said it's important that owners figure out their own solutions.

He would support user fees, since such money would be lost with the loss of a team anyway.

Budget brouhaha

Even if the budget woes are addressed quickly, as Circle Pines lawmakers hope, the session will likely be lean on policy but ripe with tax talk and budget cuts.

Rep. Philip Krinkie and Sen. Mady Reiter, both Republicans from Shoreview, said that although it's difficult to predict just how the session will go, the tough decisions legislators are faced with this year could make for a particularly tense few months at the state capitol.

Especially when it comes to hammering out a trimmed budget.

Krinkie, always quick to take Gov. Ventura to task, criticized the governor's budget recommendations, calling Ventura's decision to raise taxes and reduce spending in near-equal amounts a "safe" and "cowardly" approach to the situation. Krinkie said the governor did not go far enough in making reductions, though Ventura noted in his state of the state address he would take that approach before recommend-

ing the Legislature raise taxes:

By trying to appease both conservatives and liberals with his "neutral" recommendations, Krinkie said, Ventura avoided aligning himself with either side of the political spectrum - a move Krinkie suggested was fueled by the governor's political plans for 2002.

"Politically, that indicates someone who wants to run for re-election," Krinkie said.

Ventura recently has implied he may run for re-election in 2002, but said he won't announce his final decision until this summer.

Political aspirations aside, the governor's attempts to offer a balanced approach could lead to a repeat performance of last year's extended legislative special session. While Ventura has called upon legislators to act quickly to address the budget shortfall, Krinkie said that will be virtually impossible with Republicans opposed to tax increases and DFLers resistant to spending reductions.

"What the governor has done is stalemated the process even before we've begun," he said. "He has put an unpalatable position on the table for both sides. He has frozen (legislators) out."

Reiter, too, said she was "not real impressed" by Ventura's recommendations, adding that she considered them a "rework" of old ideas. Although she expects legislators will be eager to stick to this bonding year's shortened

schedule, Reiter said she could see Republicans and DFLers in a deadlock over budget cuts.

"I'm looking forward to a short session, because if we can fix the budget in the short session, that would be the best taxpayers can get."

Even if that happens, Reiter anticipates the Legislature will address a host of issues, all of which will be related to taxes. Among other goals, Reiter plans to continue pursuing the elimination of sales tax to political subdivisions of a state, such as cities, townships and counties. She supports putting motor vehicle sales tax dollars toward highway funding, and wants the Legislature to establish an April 15 deadline for tax bills in budgeting years as well.

Reiter said Ventura's recommendation to increase the gas tax also won't fly with the folks she represents - and a number of constituents have already called to tell her so.

"A gas tax (increase) is not something my Senate district wants to tolerate," she said. "I don't want any taxes increased. I don't want any fees increased."

District 53 residents also have encouraged Reiter to "hold the line" on spending - except when it comes to education. She said a number of people continue to contact her in support of additional funding for education.

Reiter said that because it's a legislative and gubernatorial election year, legislative redistricting plans will come to fruition this year, and the Legislature may need to address the aftermath of Sept. 11, she had expected her second legislative session to be politically hostile for quite some time. With the state budget shortfall adding significant additional pressure to the session, she's even more sure of it.

"I already thought (the session) would be contentious," she said, later adding, "I see it being extremely partisan ... I believe you'll see some tempers."

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Westerberg announces 2002 survey results

Education, welfare, gas tax, same-sex partner benefits among issues addressed

Legislature 2002

District 51A state Rep. Andy Westerberg (R-Blaine) recently announced the results of his 2002 Legislative Survey. The results reflect those surveys that were returned to Westerberg's Capitol office.

"I was really pleased by the response to this year's survey," Westerberg said. "It's great to hear what people in the Blaine area are thinking about on the various issues."

People "felt very strongly about some issues," Westerberg continued. "For example, 72 percent of the survey respondents believe local businesses and patrons should decide whether or not to ban smoking in restaurants and bars.

"Additionally, people felt strongly about requiring students to recite the Pledge of Allegiance in school once a week, with 83 percent responding affirmatively."

Among other questions posed to residents, with the responses by percentage:

• **Would you support an increase in Minnesota's gas tax to provide additional funds for transportation projects across the state?**

No — 60 percent;
Yes — 28 percent;
Undecided — 12 percent.

• **What should the priority be when it comes to how state education dollars are spent?**

Reducing class sizes — 35 percent;
Maintaining school facilities — 29 percent;

Increasing computer access in schools — 23 percent;

Increasing teacher salaries — 4 percent;
Other — 9 percent.

• **What is the most important K-12 education issue the Legislature should examine?**

Increased accountability — 71 percent;
Increased funding — 29 percent.

• **Do you support allowing Minnesotans to vote on a constitutional amendment to allow private owners or the state to operate casinos?**

No — 37 percent;

Yes — 33 percent;

Only if some or all of the profits benefitted the state of Minnesota — 25 percent;

Undecided — 5 percent.

• **Considering that we use more electricity now than ever before and that we are likely to face shortages and price increases in the future, do you support efforts to make it easier for energy companies to build power plants in Minnesota?**

Yes — 73 percent;

No — 13 percent;

Undecided — 14 percent.

• **Minnesota currently has a five-year time limit for being on welfare. Should this time limit be maintained?**

Yes, keep the five-year limit — 46 percent;

No, increase the limit to more than five years — 35 percent;

No, lower the limit to less than five years — 19 percent.

• **Should the Legislature approve the new state employee contract that includes benefits for same-sex domestic partners?**

No — 75 percent;

Yes — 17 percent;

Undecided — 8 percent.

RAMSEY COUNTY FOCUS

COLUMBIA HEIGHTS, MN
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Sun*Focus News—Thurs., March 28, 2002 —9

Westerberg focuses on Hwy. 65 traffic problems

By Elyse Kaner
Sun Focus

Legislature 2002

This legislative session, District 51A state Rep. Andy Westerberg (R-Blaine) is working closely with MnDOT and Anoka County to solve the mounting traffic congestion problems on Highway 65. He is also chief author of a bill that would throw \$4.25 million of financial support behind construction of a conference event center that would be located next to the National Sports Center (NSC).

"With the additional development in Blaine along Highway 65, it's just imperative that we try to move forward and get this taken care of as soon as we can," Westerberg said about the burgeoning roadway use.

He says the best fix for Highway 65 would be to add another lane in each direction between I-694 and East Bethel. Unfortunately, funding for such a project is non-existent, he said.

But Westerberg feels that three lanes running through Blaine from Highway 10 to Highway 242 could be a viable



Andy Westerberg

plan.

He explained that during the bonding year in the Legislature, the State of Minnesota allocates money to departments, but cannot allocate for specific projects, such as the Highway 65 project.

However, Westerberg credits Transportation Commissioner El Tinklenberg, former mayor of Blaine and no stranger to the traffic tie-up problems along Highway 65, for coming up with a program to possibly help relieve the traffic issue under a category called 'dangerous intersections' in Minnesota. According to Westerberg, 25 of the top 200 dangerous intersections exist along Highway 65, from I-694 to East Bethel.

"So we're going to, hopefully, direct the money along that corridor to alleviate those dangerous intersections," he said.

Studies have found, says Westerberg, that the best way to correct dangerous intersections is to accelerate the flow of traffic through the intersection. "And that's what the third lane is designed to do," he said.

Westerberg has conducted his own informal study by driving through rush-hour traffic along both sides of Highway 65, and says MnDOT has done a good job of synchronizing the lights. "The problem is the traffic is just so heavy, there isn't any place to go."

Traffic partially funneling down from the Northstar Corridor, the fastest growing corridor in the state, adds to the high-volume traffic problem, he said.

As Blaine continues its explosive expansion rate with

approximately 1,050 homes to be constructed at Club West, at Highway 65 and 109th Avenue, and 4,000 more homes in the Lakes Addition, near Highway 242 and Radisson Road, traffic problems will increase dramatically, says Westerberg.

A convention event center, with spacious rooms, would allow NSC business to be conducted in one location, resulting in fewer vehicles on Highway 65, said Westerberg.

Currently, the 3 million tourists attracted to the NSC annually have to leave the property to attend meetings elsewhere.

"We don't [currently] have a room big enough to have more than 60 people meet at one time," Westerberg noted.

The NSC, says Westerberg, is the second largest tourist attraction in Minnesota. Of the economic impact the NSC brings to the state, 68 percent comes from other states and 26 other countries around the world, he said. "This is so important to our state economy," he commented.

Now is a good time to move forward when the state's bond ratings are high and interest rates are low, explained the legislator.

Because the convention event center is included in the House, Senate and Governor's bonding bills, Westerberg said, "I can almost guarantee it's going to happen."

Regarding road funding, both Senate and House bills will be sent to a conference committee for comparison and negotiation. "We've made the money available. El Tinklenberg has a plan to be able to use it for Highway 65. But I can't guarantee anything there," said Westerberg.

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DISTRICT 51A

First elected in 1998

Westerberg officially files for his re-election as state representative with Secretary of State's office

State Rep. Andy Westerberg (R-Blaine) has made it official that he will seek re-election to the Minnesota House of Representatives by filing with the Secretary of State's office.

Westerberg said he is a strong voice for

transportation, education, and economic development issues in Minnesota. "It has been a privilege to serve the people of Blaine for the past four years, and I look forward to representing their interests once again in St. Paul," Westerberg said.

First elected in 1998, Westerberg is seeking re-election as representative for District 51A. After redistricting this year, 51A lies completely within the borders of the city of Blaine.

Westerberg currently serves on the

Commerce, Jobs, and Economic Development Committee, as well as the committees on Economic Development and Tourism Division, Transportation Finance, and Transportation Policy.

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DISTRICT 51A

Seeking third consecutive term

Westerberg receives unanimous nomination from Republicans for re-election to the House

State Rep. Andy Westerberg, R-Blaine, has been unanimously endorsed for re-election to a third term in the Minnesota House of Representatives. Westerberg said his goals as a legislator were an improved transportation infrastructure, fair funding for education and wise use of tax dollars.

"I am honored to serve you in the Legislature and will continue to represent the best interests of our community," he said. "As part of the House Republican majority, I am proud that we have held the line on tax and spending increases, I have been a part of governing in

both times of budget surpluses and budget shortfalls. It's certainly easier to govern in times of surpluses, but I am confident that the outcome of the current legislative session will be positive for our state."

Elected in 1998, Westerberg said he has made transportation a top priority and serves on both the Transportation Policy and Finance committees. He also serves on the Commerce, Jobs and Economic Development Committee and Tourism Division.

"Transportation issues directly affect the everyday lives of Blaine area residents,"

Westerberg said. "I am doing all that I can to make the Highways 65-242 intersection safer. Our future depends on a system of transportation that can adequately move people and products effectively and efficiently in order to succeed."

Westerberg also said that he is looking forward to the campaign season and knocking on the doors of local residents.

"Meeting the people of our area is a part of the campaign season that I really look forward to," he said. "I enjoy meeting all of you and hearing about the issues that are on your mind."



Rep. Andy Westerberg

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WEEKLY

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MINNESOTA CLIPPING SERVICE

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Dangerous intersection input

To The Editor:

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Last year, I received a number of suggestions from local residents on how best to solve the problems at the dangerous intersection of Minnesota Highways 65 and 242. Since that time, I have been in contact with the Minnesota Department of Transportation, working to find a solution to the safety issues this intersection has presented.

As many of you know, when turning left from eastbound Highway 242 on to northbound Highway 65, the green turn signal never seems to stay green long enough, allowing few cars to actually turn. Motorists seem to consistently run the red light in frustration, causing accidents and traffic back-ups.

In working with the Department of Transportation, we have twice lengthened the amount of time that the left-turn signal stays green.

However, in doing so, other traffic backups have occurred at other stoplights along Highway 65.

I strongly believe that the best solution to this problem at this time is putting in two left-turn lanes, allowing double the number of cars to turn while there is a green light. In looking to the future, I know the Minnesota Department of Transportation plans to build an overpass, but the money just isn't there to build an overpass at this time.

If you have other suggestions of how best to prevent future automobile accidents and make this intersection less dangerous, please contact me at (651)-296-4226 or rep.andy.westerberg@house.leg.state.mn.us. I look forward to hearing from you in the coming weeks!

Sincerely

• Andy Westerberg
State Representative

COLUMBIA HEIGHTS AND
FRIDLEY SUN FOCUS

FRIDLEY, MN
WEEKLY 10,004

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LETTERS TO THE ED

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**Thanks to Blaine Blazin' 4th
organizers and participants**

To the Editor:

51A

The Blazin' 4th Celebration has come to be a family tradition in Blaine over the past 32 years. I was happy to be a part of this year's parade and festivities, not only because it was a fun-filled evening of Americana, but also because it provided us the opportunity to show the pride we have in our country together as families.

Many of the "Family Fun Days" events surrounding this year's Blazin' 4th celebration took place at Aquatore Park instead of the National Sports Center. Logistically, the move was a big undertaking, but the result was outstanding — one which many families will not soon forget. The carnival, music, crafts, food, parade and atmosphere were exceptional.

I would like to say a heartfelt thanks to the Blazin' 4th organizers who worked so hard to make the experience a positive one, as well as to all the participants who took part. To create a family event that can bring together people from all different facets of our community for a weekend of celebration and fun is a wonderful civic service. I applaud you on behalf of my family and those throughout the area. Your efforts are very much appreciated and we look forward to next year's celebration!

• **State Rep. Andy Westerberg**
District 51A

COLUMBIA HEIGHTS AND
FRIDLEY SUN FOCUS

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**Westerberg discusses
school bus transportation
To the editor:**

Like many families, businesses and governments, school districts across the state are facing some tough budgetary decisions since the events of September 11. Unfortunately for Blaine residents, our school district has decided to make financial cuts to the school bus system, leaving many parents concerned for their children's safety.

Many students are being forced to walk across busy roads and intersections such as Highway 65 and Highway 242, or pay additional fees for bus service. I am disappointed that even though the Legislature managed to maintain funding for K-12 education during the 2002 session, that school district officials would choose to eliminate busing along such busy thoroughfares.

I will continue to fight for educational funding, so that schools will not be forced to make reductions to valuable programs such as student transportation. I look forward to supporting a reasonable referendum increase on the ballot in November to allocate more money for our school district. Hopefully this additional support will allow a full bus schedule to be reinstated, or at least lead to combined routes to transport students in areas of questionable safety.

In the meantime, I would like to thank volunteers such as Jim Pettit and many others who have decided to serve as crossing guards to help protect school children on busy streets. These individuals have taken the initiative, sacrificing time and energy to keep our kids safe in the absence of secure transportation. You have the gratitude of myself, and many concerned parents throughout our community.

• **State Rep. Andy Westerberg**
District 51A
(R-Blaine)

ANOKA COUNTY UNION

ANOKA, MN
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Tough decisions ahead at state

To The Editor:

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I am truly honored to have the opportunity to serve the citizens of Blaine for a third consecutive term.

Voters have said they want the Legislature to balance the budget from a conservative point of view, much like they must use in balancing their own checkbook.

Requiring tough decisions on our tax dollars to make sure we get value and accountability for them is a must.

To the many people that volunteered their time, efforts and

votes to help me continue with the honor and privilege of representing them at the capitol - Thank you!

I will continue to work for safer streets and highways, better schools, and to reduce the heavy tax burden that exists upon Minnesota's working families. I will do my very best to represent our district.

Questions, comments, and new ideas are always appreciated.

Andy Westerberg, •
State Rep.

QUAD COMMUNITY PRESS

WHITE BEAR LAKE, MN
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Traffic safety remains a concern

As a result of the re-drawing of legislative district lines by the Minnesota courts I want to take this opportunity to tell you a little bit about the issues I have been working on as your legislator.

Transportation is the issue I hear about the most from my constituents. As a member of the House Transportation Finance and Policy committees, I have diligently worked to find ways to solve Minnesota's transportation problems.

Last year, I received a number of suggestions from local residents on how to best solve the problems at the dangerous intersection of Minnesota Highway 65 and 242 and I have been in contact with the Minnesota Department of Transportation, working to find a solution to the safety issues this intersection has presented.

As you may know, when turning left from east-bound Highway 242 onto north-bound Highway 65, the green turn signal never seems to stay green long enough,

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door

✓
Andy
Westerberg



allowing few cars to actually turn. Motorists seem to consistently run the red light in frustration, causing accidents and traffic back-ups. In working with the Department of Transportation, we have twice lengthened the amount of time that the left turn signal stays green. However, in doing so, other traffic back-ups have occurred at other stop lights along Highway 65.

I believe that a solution to this problem is putting in two left turn lanes, allowing double the number of cars to turn while there is a green light. I know the Minnesota Department of Transportation plans to build

an overpass over Highway 65 while adding a third lane - but the money just isn't there at this time.

Another issue that I hear a great deal about is education. Over the course of my service in the Legislature, I am proud to say that funding for the per-pupil-formula has dramatically increased. I hope to continue to work to provide more equitable funding for our suburban schools, while at the same time ensuring educational accountability.

It is my pleasure to represent you in St. Paul. While I have only mentioned the issues of transportation and education, I am always willing to talk about any issue of concern to you. I am always interested in your thoughts on the issues. Please feel free to contact me at 651-296-4226 or rep.andy.westerberg@house.leg.state.mn.us. I look forward to hearing from you!

State Rep. Andy Westerberg
(R-Blaine) represents District 51A.

NORTHERN SUBURBS

MINNESOTA

Commuter-rail ride builds more support

Project backers say legislative help is crucial

PIONEER PRESS, JAN 29 02

BY NANCY NGO
Pioneer Press

It's Gov. Jesse Ventura's most expensive single project in his \$845 million capital improvement program.

But the Legislature still must determine this session whether it wants to support the \$120 million Northstar Corridor commuter-rail from downtown Minneapolis to St. Cloud, Minn.

"It's going to be a little tough," Rep. Kathy Tingelstad, R-Andover, said of the necessary approvals. Tingelstad is the House author of the transportation bill.

A commuter demonstration ride on Monday drew more support, but not necessarily votes, for some of the 60 legislators who took a tour from downtown Minneapolis to Elk River, Minn. The Northstar Corridor Development Authority — a joint powers board made up of counties, regional railroad authorities, cities and townships along the corridor — held two tours Monday so the public and legislators could see for themselves how the transportation line would operate.

"We're trying to let people know what it would really be like," said Tim Jantos, director of the Northstar Corridor Project.

Supporters of the project see this legislative session as a crucial time to win state support. If the Legislature chips in 40 percent for the \$270 million project, the project would secure an additional 50 percent from the federal government. Otherwise, that money would be allocated toward other national projects. Ten percent, or \$27 million, of the project is expected to come from local funding.

Proponents also say the rail cars would take 10,000 people off the highways in rapidly growing areas and would especially relieve Interstate 94 and U.S. 10. However, earlier studies by the Department of Transportation concluded that the commuter rail would do little to reduce highway congestion.

The plan envisions an 80-mile corridor on existing railroad tracks along U.S. 10 and Highway 47 through Anoka, Sherburne, Benton and Morrison counties.

Twelve locations have been identified for stations: downtown and northeast Minneapolis, Fridley, Coon Rapids, Ramsey or Anoka, Elk River, Big Lake, Becker, Clear Lake and three locations in St. Cloud.

AMENITIES

The \$270 million North Star Corridor commuter-rail line project would include stations, parking spaces, track-and-signal improvements, bus stops as well as the purchasing of locomotives and coaches. In addition to the project costs, operating and maintenance costs are \$10 million to \$15 million annually and are expected to be covered by ticket sales, federal grants and state money. For more information visit www.mn-GetOnBoard.com.

Legislators who were undecided about whether they supported the commuter-rail bill had many of their apprehensions and questions addressed Monday.

"I wasn't as strongly supportive before, I'm more supportive at this time," said Rep. Andy Westerberg, R-Blaine, whose district includes Blaine and Lexington. Still, as far as voting in favor of the bill, he said, "I'm noncommittal."

A member of the House transportation policy and finance committees, Westerberg said he was concerned about safety and efficient scheduling. But that changed for him after the demonstration ride.

The split-level two-story commuter rail traveled smoothly, slowing as it steered through developed neighborhoods. In industrial or rural areas, it sped up to 80 miles per hour. The estimated time to get to Elk River, one hour, was almost exact.

Roxann Daggett, R-Frazee, said she was impressed that the line continued to operate as planned despite Monday's weather, in which a portion of U.S. 10 was closed and traffic backed up after a car accident caused by icy roads.

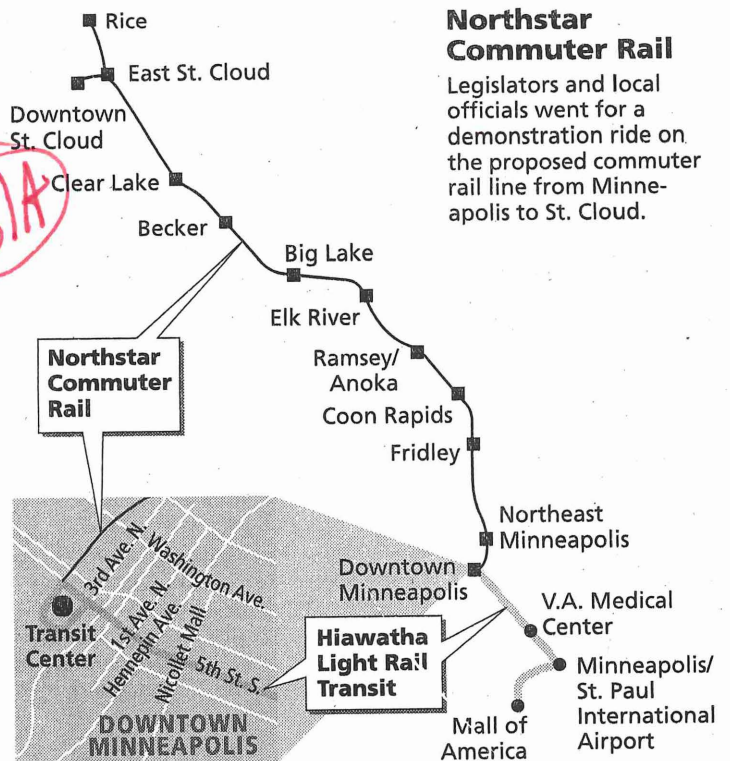
"I think the best advertising for them was: the highway closed but the commuter rail went on," Daggett said.

However, Daggett said she still had questions about how the state was going to pay for such a project.

Nancy Ngo, who covers north suburban communities, can be reached at nngo@pioneerpress.com or (651) 228-2149.

Northstar Commuter Rail

Legislators and local officials went for a demonstration ride on the proposed commuter rail line from Minneapolis to St. Cloud.



Source: Northstar Corridor Development Authority

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